

A portrait of FBI corruption

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The FBI has engaged in a systematic "cover-up" of the extent of its illegal break-ins, its use of thousands of phony informant files and a number of instances of fraud and corruption within the bureau, a retired agent charges.

The Justice Department has been investigating for more than six months a broad range of 25 allegations by the former agent, including charges that a few FBI agents pocketed money intended for their fictitious informants, sources said.

The agent, who asked that his name be withheld, outlined his charges and gave his version of the inner workings of the FBI over the last three decades in four hours of tape-recorded interviews with UPI. Among his major allegations:

- Pressure from superiors stirred FBI agents for years to invent thousands of fake informants, and agents sometimes kept for themselves cash allotted for the informants. The massive phony files also were used at budget time to deceive Congress into believing the FBI had a heavier caseload than it really had.

- Attorney General Griffin Bell may be willing to sacrifice \$40 million in taxpayers' money to the Socialist Workers Party in a civil suit because he wants to avoid

revealing the bureau's phony informant system and its infiltration of the SWP's highest offices.

The Justice Department has said it may default in the lawsuit rather than yield to a federal judge's order that it release the names of 18 SWP informants. It said to do so would threaten the bureau's ability to insure informants' confidentiality in the future.

- The bureau committed upwards of 20,000 illegal break-ins or "bag jobs" in the last three decades at the offices and homes of political activists. The FBI has told Congress it knew of 238 break-ins of targets considered national security threats and of "numerous others" against three other types of targets.

Citing recent reforms by the agency, the agent said:

"Bag jobs are not going on now. The COINTEL (the bureau's word for its domestic disruption and counter intelligence efforts during the 1960s) is not going on. But now everyone is lying about it ... just to save themselves and the bureau's image."

He said the "cover-up" of the bureau's activities appeared to extend to the recent investigation of FBI break-ins used in a hunt for fugitive members of the radical Weather Underground in the early 1970s.

jobs than that myself."

The agent also charged that several top officials of a field office and dozens of agents accepted gifts ranging from \$400 watches to clock radios from a figure linked to

The agent, who was assigned to offices in several large cities over the years, said two FBI officials approached him in June 1977, suggesting that, if called before a grand jury, he deny having a role in those break-ins.

The retired agent said he also overheard the head of an FBI field office discuss on the phone with a superior at headquarters in Washington the possibility of "getting all of the agents together to tell the same story."

FBI Director William Webster, culminating a 2½-year investigation of the unauthorized break-ins, wiretaps and mail-openings, fired two FBI agents last week and disciplined four others.

He exonerated 59 agents who, he concluded, were acting on orders from above. Former FBI Director L. Patrick Gray and two of his aides face a January trial on charges they approved the activities.

Webster said a second internal investigation is under way into charges that the FBI withheld information from Congress and the General Accounting Office about the Weather Underground break-ins.

The retired agent said of the Justice Department's disclosure of the 238 break-ins: "I did more bag

organized crime in 1973, following an investigation of the kidnapping-murder of the mobster's daughter.

And he said one FBI office ran football and basketball pools, set up with odds gleaned by the gambling squad from a wiretap.